

**Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School**

**Tiered Focused Monitoring Report**

**Continuous Improvement and Monitoring Plan**

**For** **Group B Universal Standards**

**Tier Level** **1**

**Dates of Onsite Visit:** **May 2, 2023**

**Date of Final Report:** **November 6, 2023**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Onsite Team Members:**

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**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING REPORT**

**Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School**

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**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

# **TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING REPORT INTRODUCTION**

During the 2022-2023 school year, Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School participated in a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review (TFM) conducted by the Department’s Office of Public School Monitoring (PSM). The purpose of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review is to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements focusing on special education and civil rights.

Each school district, charter school, vocational school, and virtual school undergoes a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review every three years. The statewide Tiered Focused Monitoring cycle is posted at <<https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/6yrcycle.html>>.

Regularly monitored standards are divided into two groups, known as Group A Universal Standards and Group B Universal Standards. Districts and schools are monitored on an alternate set of Universal Standards every three years.

Group A Universal Standards address:

* Student identification
* IEP development
* Programming and support services
* Equal opportunity

Group B Universal Standards address:

* Licensure and professional development
* Parent/student/community engagement
* Facilities and classroom observations
* Oversight
* Time and learning
* Equal access

The Department has also reserved a specific set of criteria, collectively known as Targeted Standards, employed if LEA or school level risk assessment data indicate there is a potential issue; the identified Targeted Standards are assessed in addition to the Universal Standards.

Universal Standards and Targeted Standards are aligned with the following regulations:

Special Education (SE)

* Selected requirements from the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-2004); the federal regulations promulgated under that Act at 34 CFR Part 300; M.G.L. c. 71B, and the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Special Education regulations (603 CMR 28.00), as amended effective September 20, 2022.

Civil Rights Methods of Administration and Other General Education Requirements (CR)

* Selected federal civil rights requirements, including requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, together with selected state requirements under M.G.L. c. 76, Section 5 as amended by Chapter 199 of the Acts of 2011 and M.G.L. c. 269 §§ 17 through 19.
* Selected requirements from the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Physical Restraint regulations (603 CMR 46.00).
* Selected requirements from the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Student Learning Time regulations (603 CMR 27.00).
* Various requirements under other federal and state laws.

**PSM Team:**

Depending upon the size of a school district and the number of special education programs to be reviewed, a team of one to four Department staff members conducts onsite activities over one to five days in a school district or charter school.

**Tier Level:**

The level of monitoring varies based on tier designation, aligning supports to the level of need and ensuring that districts and schools with greater needs receive appropriate supports to make sustained improvements.

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| Tier | Title | Description |
| 1 | Self-Directed Improvement | Data points indicate no concern on compliance and student outcomes. |
| 2 | Directed Improvement | No demonstrated risk in areas with close link to student outcomes. |
| 3 | Corrective Action | Areas of concern include both compliance and student outcomes. |
| 4 | Cross-unit Support and Corrective Action | Areas of concern have a profound effect on student outcomes and ongoing compliance. |

For the 2022-2023 school year, the tier assignments are based on:

* Annual drop-out rate for students with disabilities
* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students with disabilities
* Public School Monitoring compliance data from the previous review
* Problem Resolution System data, specifically findings of noncompliance
* Special education SPP/APR compliance Indicator data for Indicators 4B, 9 & 10
  + Indicator 4B: Significant discrepancy by race or ethnicity in removal of students with

IEPs greater than 10 days

* + Indicator 9: Overall disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups identified

as eligible for special education

* + Indicator 10: Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups within specific

disability categories

* Special education SPP/APR performance Indicator data for Indicators 5 & 6
  + Indicator 5: Education Environments (6-21)
  + Indicator 6: Preschool Environments
* Significant Disproportionality data 2021-2022 & 2022-2023

Tiering adjustments may be made for districts engaged in work with the Department’s Statewide System of Support and have schools identified as requiring assistance and intervention. Tiering assignments may also be adjusted for schools and districts unable to remedy noncompliance within one year of the previous TFM review, as well as for charter schools requiring additional oversight based on conditions of their charter.

**Report: For Tier 1 & 2 Tiered Focused Monitoring Reviews**

Following the onsite visit, the PSM team holds an informal exit meeting to summarize the review for the superintendent or charter school leader. Within approximately 20 business days of the onsite visit, the chairperson forwards the TFM Feedback Summary that includes findings from the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review to the superintendent or charter school leader.

As part of the reporting process, all districts/charter schools in Tiers 1 and 2 then develop a Continuous Improvement and Monitoring Plan (CIMP) for any criteria receiving a rating of "Partially Implemented," "Not Implemented," and “Implementation in Progress.” The CIMP is due to the Department within 20 business days after the issuance of the Feedback Summary and is subject to the Department’s review and approval. The CIMP outlines an action plan, identifies the success metric, describes the measurement mechanism, and provides a completion timeframe to bring those areas into compliance with the controlling statute or regulation. Department staff provide support and assistance to districts and charter schools on the development of a CIMP.

Once the CIMP is approved, it is issued as the Final Report.

Department staff also provide ongoing technical assistance as the school or district is implementing the approved CIMP. **School districts and charter schools must demonstrate effective resolution of noncompliance identified by the Department as soon as possible but in no case later than one year from the issuance of the Department’s Feedback Summary.**

For more information regarding the TFM Review Process, including district and parent resources, please visit < <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/default.html>>.

# **TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING FINAL REPORT**

**for Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review at the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School during the week of May 1, 2023, to evaluate the implementation of Group B Universal Standards in the program areas of special education, civil rights, and other related general education requirements. The team appreciated the opportunity to interview staff and parents, to observe classroom facilities, and to review the programs underway in the school.

In preparing this report, the team reviewed extensive written documentation regarding the operation of the school’s programs, together with information gathered by means of the following Department program review methods:

**Self-Assessment Phase:**

* School review of special education and civil rights documentation for required elements including document uploads.
* Upon completion of the self-assessment, the school submitted the data to the Department for review.

**On-site Verification Phase:**

* Interviews of administrative, instructional, and support staff consistent with those criteria selected for onsite verification.
* Interviews of a parent advisory council (PAC) representative.
* Review of additional documents for special education and civil rights.
* Surveys of parents of students in special education: Parents of students in special education were sent a survey that solicited information regarding their experiences with the school’s implementation of special education programs, related services, and procedural requirements.
* Observations of classrooms and other facilities: The onsite team visited a sample of classrooms and other school facilities used in the delivery of programs and services to determine general levels of compliance with program requirements.

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| The Tiered Focused Monitoring Report includes those criteria that were found by the team to be implemented in a “Commendable” manner, as well as criteria receiving a rating of "Partially Implemented," "Not Implemented," and “Implementation in Progress.” (Refer to the “Definition of Compliance Ratings” section of the report.) Tiered Focused Monitoring Reports do not include criteria receiving a rating of “Implemented” or “Not Applicable.” This will allow the school and the Department to focus their efforts on those areas requiring corrective action. Districts are expected to incorporate the corrective actions into their district and school improvement plans, including their professional development plans. |
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# **DEFINITION OF COMPLIANCE RATINGS**

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| **Commendable** | Any requirement or aspect of a requirement implemented in an exemplary manner significantly beyond the requirements of law or regulation. |
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| **Implemented** | The requirement is substantially met in all important aspects. |
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| **Implementation in Progress** | This rating is used for criteria containing new or updated legal requirements; the district has implemented any old requirements contained in the criterion and is training staff or beginning to implement the new requirements in such a way that the onsite team anticipates that the new requirements will be implemented by the end of the school year. |
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| **Partially Implemented** | The requirement, in one or several important aspects, is not entirely met. |
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| **Not Implemented** | The requirement is totally or substantially not met. |
| **Not Applicable** | The requirement does not apply to the school district or charter school. |

**Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School**

# **SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE CRITERIA RATINGS**

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|  | **Universal Standards**  **Special Education** | **Universal Standards**  **Civil Rights and Other General Education Requirements** |
| **IMPLEMENTED** | SE 15, SE 32, SE 35, SE 36, SE 44, SE 45, SE 46, SE 47 SE 50, SE 51, SE 52, SE 52A, SE 54, SE 55, SE 56 | CR 3, CR 7, CR 7A, CR 7B,  CR 7C, CR 8, CR 10A, CR 10B,  CR 10C, CR 12A, CR 20, CR 21,  CR 22, CR 23 |
| **PARTIALLY**  **IMPLEMENTED** |  | CR 16, CR 17A, CR 24, CR 25 |
| **NOT**  **IMPLEMENTED** | None |  |
| **NOT**  **APPLICABLE** | None |  |

The full list of criteria and information regarding the requirements can be found in Appendix B of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Toolkit available at < <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/resources/tfm-toolkit.docx>>.

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| **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND MONITORING PLAN** |
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| **Improvement Area** **1** |
| **Criterion:** CR 16 - Notice to students 16 or over leaving school without a high school diploma, certificate of attainment, or certificate of completion |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that while the charter school sends annual written notice to former students who have not yet earned their competency determination and who have not transferred to another school, the notice does not inform them of the availability of publicly funded post-high school academic support programs or encourage them to participate in such programs. |
| **LEA Outcome:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will ensure that the written notice sent to former students who have not yet earned their competency determination and have not transferred to another school includes information on the available publicly funded post-high school academic support programs and encourages them to participate in such programs. |
| **Action Plan:** By November 27, 2023, the charter school will revise the annual written notice sent to former students to include all the required information and develop a tracking system for ensuring compliance. Additionally, the school will send the revised notice to all former students who have left school in the last two years and have not yet earned their competency determination.  By February 25, 2024, the charter school will conduct training for all relevant staff on the required outreach procedures, content of the outreach notices, and the tracking system.  By April 22, 2024, the charter school will submit evidence of an internal review of applicable student records from the 2023-2024 school year to ensure that the notices sent include all the required information. The school will conduct a root cause analysis and implement appropriate corrective actions for any identified noncompliance. |
| **Success Metric:** By April 2024 and beyond, the charter school will send outreach notices that include all the required information to former students who have not graduated or transferred informing them of the available publicly funded post-high school academic support programs and encourage their participation in such programs.  Evidence:   * Copies of revised notice sent to former students * Monitoring spreadsheet for tracking * Staff training agenda, materials, and attendance sheets * Results of student record review with root cause analysis and corrective actions, if applicable |
| **Measurement Mechanism:** Continuing after the completion due date, the charter school will implement a tracking system to ensure annual outreach notices include all the required information. For any noncompliance identified, the charter school will conduct a root cause analysis and implement corrective action. Additionally, all relevant staff will be provided with annual training on the required outreach notices, outreach procedures, and the tracking system. |
| **Completion Timeframe:** 04/22/2024 |
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| **Improvement Area 2** |
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| **Criterion:** CR 17A - Use of physical restraint on any student enrolled in a publicly-funded education program |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that the charter school updated its physical restraint policy to include all requirements and shared it with the school community. However, staff have not yet been trained on the updated policy. |
| **LEA Outcome:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will ensure that all staff are trained annually on the charter school's physical restraint policy and procedures. |
| **Action Plan:** By November 27, 2023, the charter school will conduct the required physical restraint training for all staff. |
| **Success Metric:** By November 2023 and beyond, all charter school staff will be trained on the school's physical restraint policy and procedures.  Evidence:   * Staff training materials, agenda, attendance sheets |
| **Measurement Mechanism:** Continuing after the completion due date, charter school leadership will ensure that all staff receive the required physical restraint training during the first month of the school year. Additionally, any staff who are hired after the school year begins will receive the training within a month of hiring. |
| **Completion Timeframe:** 11/27/2023 |
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| **Improvement Area 3** |
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| **Criterion:** CR 24 - Curriculum review |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that although the charter school has provided staff training on identifying bias and adopted a checklist for reviewing curriculum materials for bias, the school does not ensure that all teachers review all educational materials for simplistic and demeaning generalizations on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin and sexual orientation. Furthermore, the charter school does not ensure that teachers use appropriate activities, discussions, and/or supplementary materials to provide balance and context for any such stereotypes depicted in such materials. |
| **LEA Outcome:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will ensure that individual teachers review all educational materials for simplistic and demeaning generalizations, lacking intellectual merit, on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation. Additionally, the charter school will ensure that teachers use appropriate activities, discussions, and/or supplementary materials to provide balance and context for any stereotypes depicted in such materials. |
| **Action Plan:** By November 27, 2023, the charter school will develop and implement tools and protocols for ensuring individual teacher review of educational materials and a plan for oversight.  By February 25, 2024, the Director of Curriculum will conduct training for all teachers on the educational material review tools and protocols and the charter school's plan for oversight.  By April 22, 2024, the charter school will conduct an internal review to assess the implementation of the review tools and protocols. The charter school will submit a summary of the results of the review that includes completed material review checklists, root cause analysis for any identified concerns, and summary of additional feedback and/or support provided to teachers, as necessary. |
| **Success Metric:** By April 2024 and beyond, all teachers in the charter school will review educational materials for bias and stereotyping and provide balance and context for any identified stereotypes using appropriate activities, discussions, and/or supplementary materials.  Evidence:   * Educational material review procedures and tools * Staff training agenda, materials, and attendance sheets * Internal review summary including: * Competed material review checklist * Identified concerns * Root cause analysis * Description of additional feedback/supports |
| **Measurement Mechanism:** Continuing after the completion due date, the charter school will conduct annual training for all teachers and relevant staff on the school's educational material review procedures. Additionally, the charter school will ensure that each trimester, material review checklists from individual teachers are reviewed to ensure ongoing compliance. For any noncompliance identified, the charter school will conduct a root cause analysis and implement appropriate corrective action. |
| **Completion Timeframe:** 04/22/2024 |
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| **Improvement Area 4** |
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| **Criterion:** CR 25 - Institutional self-evaluation |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that the charter school conducts surveys for various stakeholders, including faculty, parents, and students, to solicit suggestions for improving the school's programs. However, the school does not evaluate all aspects of its 9-12 program annually to ensure that all students, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, disability, or housing statues, have equal access to all programs. |
| **LEA Outcome:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will conduct an annual review of all aspects of its 9-12 program to ensure that all students, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, disability, or housing status, have equal access to all programs, including athletics and other extracurricular activities. The charter school will also ensure that appropriate changes are made as indicated by the evaluation. |
| **Action Plan:** By November 27, 2023, school leadership will develop procedures and identify tools to conduct an institutional self-evaluation. The procedures will include data review, stakeholder input, actionable root-cause analysis, action planning, and progress monitoring.  By February 25, 2024, the charter school will submit evidence of training staff and other stakeholders responsible for conducting the institutional self-evaluation.  By April 22, 2024, the charter school will submit a self-evaluation summary that includes the following components:   * Data analysis including achievement, discipline, and programming data; * Results and analysis of surveys provided to families, teachers, athletic directors, and students regarding access to the school's programs; * Actionable root cause analysis; * Action plan to address any identified access gaps; and * Progress monitoring plan with timelines. |
| **Success Metric:** By April 2024 and beyond, the charter school will conduct an annual institutional self-evaluation and develop and implement an action plan to address any identified discrepancies.  Evidence:   * Procedures and tools for annual self-evaluation * Training materials, agenda, and attendance sheets * Self-evaluation summary including:   + Data analysis   + Results and analysis of surveys   + Actionable root cause analysis   + Action plan   + Progress monitoring plan |
| **Measurement Mechanism:** Continuing after the completion due date, the charter school will annually conduct an institutional self-evaluation to ensure that all students have equal access to programming and implement changes to address any discrepancies in access. Additionally, staff and other stakeholders responsible for conducting the institutional self-evaluation will receive annual training on the evaluation procedures. |
| **Completion Timeframe:** 04/22/2024 |
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